

THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

PSALMODY

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I

THE singing of psalms and hymns has had an important place in the worship of the Christian Church from the very earliest times. This is abundantly evident from many passages in the New Testament and in the works of early Christian writers ; and we have also outside testimony from the writings of Pliny, who states that the Christians were accustomed in their assemblies to sing a hymn to Christ as God. As in the Jewish Church, so in the Christian, the Psalter took the chief place as the material of praise in public worship, though it was at no time used to the exclusion of other material.

There can be little doubt that in the early days of the Christian Church the whole of the people were accustomed to join in the singing of the Psalms, but as time went on, and the ritual became more and more intricate and elaborate, the part originally taken by the congregation devolved gradually on the priests and the choristers, until in the mediæval church, prior to the Reformation, the people were almost, if not altogether, silent in public worship. In the churches of the Reformation all this was changed : the ceremonial of worship was simplified and the people were enjoined and encouraged to resume that active participation in public worship, and especially in the service of song, from which they had been so long practically excluded.

While all the Protestant churches set themselves to provide material for congregational song, they did not all move on the same lines. In Germany, at an early date, we find Luther beginning to provide hymns for the use of his followers, and these hymns or chorales have ever since held a foremost place in the worship of the Protestant churches of Germany and in the affections of the German people. In France, on the other hand, the church, greatly influenced by Calvin at Geneva, favoured the use of the Psalms as best suited to be the chief, if not the only, material for praise in public worship. Owing to a combination of circumstances, which will be referred to shortly, Scotland ultimately

followed the example of Calvin and Geneva rather than that of Luther and Germany, and in the end the only book which received the official authorisation of the church was a metrical version of the Psalms.

In the early days of the Reformation in Scotland, however, we find the Lutheran influence predominating, many of the earlier Reformers and Martyrs, like Patrick Hamilton, having imbibed their Protestantism in Germany. Just as in that country the hymns and poems of Luther and others were a powerful agency in spreading the new doctrines, so in Scotland the circulation among the people of poems, such as those of Sir David Lyndsay satirising the practices of the Roman Church and clergy, and of psalms and hymns in the vernacular, did much to undermine the power of the Roman Church and to spread the doctrines of Protestantism. Before dealing, therefore, with what forms the main subject of this paper, namely, the metrical psalter authorised by the church, we must notice briefly an earlier book, which bears abundant traces of the German influence just referred to.

This book is believed to have been first printed between the years 1542 and 1546, but no copies of the earliest editions have survived. It is mentioned by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under various names, such as, the "Dundee Psalmes," "the Psalms of Wedderburn," "the Godly and Spiritual Songs," and latterly the "Gude and Godlie Ballates"; but the actual title, borne by the earliest editions of which copies have been discovered, is: *Ane compendious Buik of godlie psalmes and spiritual sangs, collectit furth of sundrie parts of Scripture, with diveris uther Ballates changeit out of prophane sanges in godlie sangis for avoyding of sin and harlatry, with augmentation of sindrie gude and godlie Ballates not contenit in the first edition.* No name of author or compiler appears in the book, but it has been established that in the main it is the work of the three brothers, James, John and Robert Wedderburn, sons of a Dundee merchant, who were students at St Andrews along with Patrick Hamilton, and who early in their career became converts to Protestantism. The second brother, John, went to Germany and spent a considerable time in the society of Luther, Melancthon, and the other Protestant leaders; and there is little doubt that the greater part of the book, consisting of translations or adaptations from the German, is from his pen.

The contents of the book are very various. There are metrical versions or paraphrases (mostly founded on German originals) of twenty-two Psalms, and of the Commandments, Lord's Prayer, Creed, Magnificat, etc. There are further a large number of what are called "Spiritual Sangs or Ballates," some being founded on passages of Scripture, such as the parable of the Prodigal, or, as he is called in the title, the "Forlorn" Son. These are nearly all translations from the German, and

among them are several Christmas hymns, or carols as they might now be called. One of them, a translation of Luther's "Vom himmel hoch da kom ich her" is headed "Ane Song of the Birth of Christ to be sung with the tune of Baw lula low," this being doubtless a well-known cradle song or lullaby. The most curious pieces in the collection are the ballads satirising the practices of the Romish Church and clergy. In many cases these are parodies or imitations of popular secular ballads, and were probably sung to the tunes associated with the latter. We can easily believe with what gusto such ballads would be sung during the stress of the religious struggles.

There are many references to this book and its contents in contemporary literature and history. For example, James Melville states in his *Diary*, that when he was thirteen years old, he became acquainted with "Wedderburn's Songs," of which he says, "I lerned diverse per ceur with graitt diversitie of toones." Perhaps one of the most interesting incidents in which this book plays a part is that in the life of George Wishart which is related by John Knox in his *History of the Reformation*. We are told that the night before he was taken prisoner at Ormiston in East Lothian, Wishart after supper said, "Will we sing a Psalme? and so he appointed the 51st Psalm which was put in Scottish meter, and begane thus, 'Have mercie on me now good Lord After thy great mercie.'" These are two lines from the version of Psalm li. in the Wedderburn collection.

The book must have continued in popular favour for a considerable period, for an edition appeared as late as 1621, but in spite of its popularity it never received ecclesiastical sanction, and when, after the return of John Knox from Geneva in 1559, the church proceeded to settle questions of order and worship, what was known as the "Order of Geneva," including a metrical version of the Psalms, was adopted and sanctioned for use in public worship. This book, afterwards known as the *Book of Common Order*, was first issued in complete form in 1564 when the General Assembly ordered that "every Minister, Exhorter and Reader sall heve ane of the Psalme bookes latelie printed at Edinburgh and use the order contained therein in Prayers, Marriage and Ministration of the Sacraments."

II

In order to trace the sources from which sprang this metrical psalter, we have to leave Scotland, and turn first to England, and then to France and Geneva. In 1548, or early in 1549, there was printed in London a book entitled *Certayne Psalmes chose out of the Psalter of David and drawen into English metre by Thomas Sternhold groome of ye King's Majesties roobes*. The king referred to was Edward VI, but Sternhold

had held a similar appointment in the household of Henry VIII. The volume contained only nineteen psalms, but on Sternhold's death in 1549 it was found that he had left a further instalment of eighteen versified psalms, and these were published in the same year by John Hopkins, who added seven of his own, bringing up the number to forty-four. This was the beginning of the book long known in England as "Sternhold and Hopkins." The death of Edward VI, and the revival of the old religion under Mary, put a stop to further progress with the psalm book.

In consequence of the persecution in Mary's reign, a number of Protestant refugees had formed a congregation at Frankfort, and in 1554 John Knox was appointed one of their ministers. Troubles arose in this congregation as to the use of the English Book of Common Prayer, one section insisting on its use, and the other opposing it on the ground that the Liturgy still contained many "unprofitable ceremonies" and remains of popish practices.¹ The latter party, of which Knox was a leading spirit, had compiled a simpler order of service, taking as their model that used by Calvin in the Protestant church at Geneva.

In the end a split took place, and a portion of the band left Frankfort and went to Geneva, where they formed a congregation and called Knox to be their minister. Having closely followed the example of Calvin and his church in regard to the general order of public worship, the exiles naturally took the same course in providing the material for the service of praise. In this matter Calvin had inaugurated a very decided policy, and had adopted for use in public worship a metrical version of the psalms, of which the following is a very brief account. About ten years before Edward VI's groom of the chambers began his versification of the psalms in England, Clément Marot, who held a position of the same nature in the court of Francis I. of France, was similarly occupied. Marot was of course a very much better poet than Sternhold, and he was so successful in his verses that the singing of Marot's psalms actually became a favourite pastime at the court of Francis. In 1542 Marot was banished from France for heresy, and he came to Geneva just when Calvin was engaged in organising the government and worship of the Reformed church there. Calvin at once decided that Marot's psalms were suitable for his purpose, and he induced the poet to set about revising and adding to his psalm versions with a view to their being sung in the church services. When Marot had brought up the number to forty-nine he left Geneva and died at Turin.

At the instigation of Calvin the work was continued by Theodore Beza, and though not finally completed till the year 1562, a collection of eighty-nine psalms was in use in Geneva when the Scottish and English

¹ *A Brieff discours off the troubles begonne at Franckford, etc., 1575.*

exiles formed their congregation there. We have thus two streams from which our Scottish Psalmody took its rise: the group of English Protestant refugees who separated from their brethren at Frankfort on the question of the use of the English Prayer Book; and the Protestants of France organising the church services under the guidance of John Calvin. It was the meeting of these at Geneva, with John Knox as minister of the English congregation, that determined the form under which psalmody was established and developed in the Church of Scotland.

In the year 1556, then, there was printed at Geneva: *The forme of prayeris and ministracion of the Sacraments, etc., used in the English congregation at Geneva*. The second division of this book was entitled: *One and fiftie psalmes of David in English metre, whereof 37 were made by Thomas Sternhold and the rest by others. Conferred with the hebrewe and in certain places corrected as the text and sens of the prophet required*. These fifty-one were the forty-four by Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins already referred to, with seven new versions by William Whittingham.

Whittingham was one of the most learned and influential of the Protestant exiles. He succeeded Knox in the pastorate at Geneva after the return of the latter to Scotland in 1559. Besides being the author of the seven new psalms, Whittingham seems to have been the responsible editor of the whole book, and the writer of the long preface which is prefixed to it. Considerable alterations were made on the versions by Sternhold and Hopkins, and in an interesting passage in the preface Whittingham tells us the reason for these changes. He says, "Nowe to make you privie also why we altered the ryme in certain places of hym, whome for the gyftes that God had gevyn him we esteemed and revered, thys may suffice: that in this enterprise we did onely set God before our eyes and therefore wayed the wordes and sense of the prophete, rather considering the meanyng thereof then what any man had wrytt."

This collection of fifty-one psalms is really the parent book of our Scottish Psalmody, and it is important to note that from the very first the provision of suitable music was considered by our Reformers to be a matter of first importance. Each of the fifty-one psalms is provided with a tune, which is printed at the head of the psalm, with the words of the first verse underneath the notes. All these tunes, therefore, belonged to the class called *proper* tunes, that is, tunes which belonged to one particular psalm, and were always known as the tune of that psalm. The introduction of *common* tunes, that is, tunes which could be used with various psalms at will, came much later. Of the fifty-one tunes very few have survived to the present day, and only three are to be

found in the Psalter we now have in use, namely, ¹Psalms xxix., xlv. and cxxxvii. As to the composition and origin of these tunes nothing is really known. They are all of a simple syllabic nature, and bear a strong general resemblance to the tunes in the French psalter, although only two, Psalms cxxviii. and cxxx., are actually the same in both books. It has been conjectured that these tunes may have been adaptations of the melodies of secular songs. As some of the French tunes have been traced to such a source, it may be true of these also, but no direct evidence of this has as yet been discovered.

In 1558, two years after the first publication, another edition appeared at Geneva, in which the number of the psalms was increased to sixty-two: nine of the eleven new psalms being by Whittingham and the other two by John Pullain, another of the exiles. In this edition the French influence becomes much more marked, for five of the new psalms reproduce the metre of the contemporary French version and are set to the French tunes. One of the most notable of these additions is Psalm cxxiv.—“Now Israel may say.” This version by Whittingham is a close reproduction of the French by Beza, and its well-known tune is that to which it is set in the French psalter.

The next enlargement of the collection was in 1561, when an edition was printed at Geneva and reprinted, probably in England, containing eighty-seven psalms, the new versions being all by William Kethe. Kethe is believed on good grounds to have been a Scotsman, but nothing is certainly known of his early history. By this time Beza had all but completed the French psalter, and seventeen of Kethe's psalms are set to tunes from that book, the metre being copied from the French, apparently in order to make the French tunes available. While some of these reproductions of French metres are very successful, such as that of Psalm cxxiv. just referred to, yet in many cases they must be pronounced failures, especially from a poetical point of view. Unfortunately the English translators thought it was sufficient if the lines of the English versions contained the same number of syllables as those of the French, without paying any regard to rhythm or accent. The result is that many of the versions are full of false accents and rhythms, the effect being sufficiently grotesque. In the edition of 1561 appears for the first time Kethe's famous version of Psalm c., “All people that on earth do dwell,” set to its equally famous tune. The latter was taken exactly from the French psalter, where however it belongs not to Psalm c., but to Psalm cxxxiv.

In Scotland the Reformation had by this time become an accomplished fact, and the First Book of Discipline, issued in 1560, refers to the “Order of Geneva” as that in accordance with which the services of the church were conducted. There is no doubt that the adoption

of that order involved also the use in worship of the metrical psalms which formed an integral part of it, but the records of the General Assembly throw no light on the steps which were taken to complete the Psalter. In December 1562, however, the Assembly lent Robert Lekprevik "200 pounds to help to buy irons, ink and paper and to fee craftsmen for printing of the psalms"; and in 1564 the complete book was printed and sanctioned for use.

In England the Reformers, in completing the metrical psalter which was so long in use there, adopted the contents of the 1556 book, that is, the collection of fifty-one psalms published at Geneva, but ignored the greater part of the additions subsequently made at Geneva. They made up the complete number of the psalms with versions by Hopkins and other English writers. The complete English book appeared in 1562, and from it the Scottish compilers took forty-two versions; twenty-one new ones were supplied by two Scottish writers, which with the eighty-seven of the Genevan edition of 1561 made up the total of one hundred and fifty. Six of the twenty-one new psalms were by the Rev. Robert Pont, who, in 1562, was minister of Dunblane, but a few years later came to Edinburgh and became minister of St Cuthberts, in which charge he remained till his death in 1606. His son, Zachary Pont, married one of John Knox's daughters. Pont's psalms have no very characteristic features; two of them are modelled on the French and exhibit to the full the faults already referred to. The other fifteen new psalms are distinguished merely by the initials I. C., but it is practically certain that these stand for John Craig, one of the leading Scottish Reformers, who, after preaching for some time in the Magdalene Chapel in the Cowgate of Edinburgh, was appointed colleague to John Knox in St Giles. Three of Craig's versions are worthy of note as they are among the few remains of the old Reformation psalter which still continue in use, having been inserted as "second versions" in our present psalm book. These are Psalms cxxxvi., cxliii. and cxlv. Psalm cxxxvi. has been slightly altered, but its fine refrain remains as Craig wrote it—"For certainly, His mercies dure, Most firm and sure, Eternally." Psalm cxliii.—"O hear my prayer, Lord"—has undergone rather more revision, but Psalm cxlv., in long metre—"O Lord thou art my God and King"—remains with some slight verbal changes, and is still one of those most frequently sung in the churches.

This brief sketch of the origin and growth to completion of the collection of psalms in metre which formed the authorised material for praise in the Church of Scotland from 1564 to the middle of the seventeenth century, is sufficient to show the care and deliberation which were bestowed on its compilation. Evidently the work was considered

of sufficient importance to engage the attention and active co-operation of some of the very foremost men among the leaders of the church at the time.

III

When the old psalm book is compared with our present version, a striking feature is the much greater variety of metre found in the former. In our present version only four psalms are in metres styled *peculiar*, there being only three varieties of these. In the Reformation book, on the other hand, thirty-five versions are *peculiar*, embracing no less than twenty-seven varieties of metre. No doubt many of the latter, specially those copied from the French and exhibiting the serious defect which has been alluded to, must have been found somewhat unsingable, and so were allowed to fall into disuse; but it is to be regretted that we have so entirely lost the advantage of the variety supplied by the old version.

From a literary or poetical standpoint it is no doubt very easy to criticise adversely this version, but it is only fair to keep in mind the purpose of its authors, which was, not to write fine poetry, but, adhering as close as possible to the original, to reproduce the psalms in a form suitable for the common people to sing and commit to memory. This consideration possibly accounts for the predominance of common metre, this being the metre most frequently used in the old popular romances and ballads, and hence sometimes called *ballad* metre. Sternhold used this metre almost exclusively, and on the whole his verse is distinguished by simplicity and directness of expression. Perhaps his best lines are those which have been often quoted from Psalm xviii. :

“ The Lord descended from above,
and bowed the heavens high ;
And underneath his feet he cast
the darkness of the sky.
On cherubs and on cherubims
full royally he rode ;
And on the wings of all the winds
came flying all abroad.”

In the psalms by Hopkins we come more frequently on those awkward and uncouth expressions which have afforded sport for hostile critics. He also confined himself to the common metre, and generally tried to make the first and third lines rhyme as well as the second and fourth. As a consequence we have such odd expressions as in Psalm lxxii. 1 :

“ Lord give thy judgements to the king,
therein instruct him well ;
And with his son, that princely thing,
Lord, let thy justice dwell.”

and in Psalm lxxiv. 11 :

“ Why dost thou draw thine hand aback
and hide it in thy lap ?
O pluck it out and be not slack
to give thy foes a rap.”

The psalms by Whittingham and Kethe, who may be styled the Genevan contributors to the book, include some of the best as well as some of the least successful in the collection. The gem of the whole is certainly Kethe's Psalm c., the immortal “ All people that on earth do dwell,” which at the present day is probably in more universal use than any hymn in the language. It is flattering to our national pride that it was written by a Scotsman, and also that though excluded by the English compilers from the first edition of their book, it was added a few years later, and has maintained its place ever since.¹ Whittingham's Psalm cxxiv. has been already referred to as one of the most successful copies of the French version, and Kethe's Psalm xlvii., also copied from the French, is worthy of notice, being in a metre quite unrepresented in our present book. It begins :

“ Let all folk with joy
Clap hands and rejoice,
And sing unto God
With most cheerful voice.
For high is the Lord and feared to be
The earth over all. A great king is he.
In daunting the folk He hath so well wrought
That under our feet whole nations are brought.”

Of the version as a whole, while it must be admitted that it exhibits high poetic merit only here and there, and that it contains only too many instances of awkward and even doggerel lines, yet it possesses these qualities of simple strength and literal directness which made it fulfil the purposes for which it was intended.

Before leaving the subject of the literary contents of the book, mention must be made of the appendages to the Psalter generally known as the *Spiritual Songs*. These were of two kinds, first, metrical versions of passages of Scripture other than the psalms ; and second, independent original compositions. The first edition of 1564 contains none of these pieces, but they began to be added very shortly after that date, and

¹ We have it to-day just as Kethe wrote it with the exception of three slight changes. In verse 1, line 3, the original is “ Him serve with fear.” This remained in all the editions of the old psalm book, though probably the present form “ with mirth ” is more in accord with the Hebrew. In verse 2, line 1, the original reads, “ The Lord ye know is God indeed,” and line 3, “ We are his folk, he doth us feed.” Strange to say the alteration of folk to flock was made at a very early period, and was probably due to a printer's error in transposing the letters “ o ” and “ l.”

nearly all the subsequent editions contain them in a greater or less number. Those most frequently printed were ten in number, namely, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Magnificat, the *Nunc Dimittis*, the Apostles' Creed, the *Veni Creator*, the "Humble Suit of a Sinner," the "Complaint of a Sinner," and two pieces bearing the same title, "The Lamentation of a Sinner." The presence of these pieces in the psalm book seems to show that the Reformers did not hold the narrow views as to the use of "human hymns" which prevailed at a later period of our history, and which are extant in certain quarters even at the present day. It is true that the edition which was authorised by the Assembly of 1564 contained the psalms alone, and no express sanction seems ever to have been given to the subsequent additions; still, the fact that these songs were allowed to appear time after time in the psalm book without remonstrance, goes far to prove that their use was at least permitted. The church authorities of that day were certainly never backward in expressing their mind in regard to anything of which they did not approve, and we may be pretty certain that had they held the later view, that the use of such hymns was contrary to the authority of Scripture, and a violation of the purity of worship, they would have had no hesitation in prohibiting their publication in the psalm book, along with the psalms.

IV

An idea has been prevalent in some quarters that Calvin and his followers, including our Scottish Reformers, were indifferent, or even hostile, to the claims of music to a place in the services of the sanctuary. This, however, is an entire mistake, as can easily be shown both from their writings and their actions. In his preface to the French Genevan psalter, Calvin says: "Among other things which are suitable for the recreation of men, and for giving them pleasure, music is the first, or one of the chief, and we should esteem it as a gift of God bestowed for that end." He also says: "In truth we know by experience that song has great force and power in moving and inflaming the heart of man to invoke and praise God with more vehement and ardent zeal. It should always be seen to, that the song be not light and frivolous, but that it have weight and majesty (as said St Augustine), and also that there is a great difference between the music that is employed for the enjoyment of men at table and in their houses, and the psalms which they sing in church in the presence of God. But when the form here given is rightly judged of, we hope that it will be found holy and pure; seeing that it is simply arranged for the edification of which we have spoken, as well as that the practice of singing may be greatly

extended." Whittingham in his preface echoes Calvin's words: "As music or singing is natural to us, and therefore every man delighteth therein; so our merciful God setteth before our eyes, how we may rejoice and sing to the glory of his Name, recreation of our spirits, and profit of ourselves."

Our Reformers not only held these opinions but they took care to carry them into practice; and it is a striking fact that all the early editions of the psalm book contained the tunes as well as the words. Of twelve editions known to have been issued between 1564 and 1600 only two are without music, the earliest of these being at least twelve years after the first issue. The compilers of the psalm book did not leave this matter of the tunes to chance or to the caprice of whoever might be charged with the conduct of the praise, but were careful themselves to provide the music they considered suitable for the purpose. In the edition of fifty-one psalms printed at Geneva in 1556, each psalm was furnished with its *proper* tune. At the various stages by which the psalter was completed, we find some of these tunes were dropped, many more were added, and changes were made by transferring certain tunes from one psalm to another; showing that at every stage the question of the music was carefully considered.

In the final complete edition of 1564 there are a hundred and five tunes, these being printed at the head of their respective psalms over the words of the first verse. The remaining forty-five psalms, not provided with tunes of their own, are directed to be sung to the tunes of other psalms. These tunes remained practically the same during the whole lifetime of the book. The melody only is given, and it was fully sixty years later before any tunes were printed in harmony.

Absolutely nothing is known as to the musicians who either composed or adapted these melodies. No doubt Whittingham and his colleagues at Geneva would have the assistance of the musicians there who were working on the French psalter, but though we know the names of several Scottish musicians who, later on, were engaged in harmonising the tunes, we have no evidence to connect any of them with the selection or adaptation of the tunes to begin with. The melodies are characterised by a severe simplicity and dignity, in accordance with Calvin's precepts. They are all syllabic, that is, one note to each syllable, slurs being unknown, but while that is so, the notes are not by any means all of equal length: the notation is in minims and semibreves and the mixture of these is in many cases somewhat puzzling, as it is not easy to see how the differing length of the notes is to be made to fit in with the rhythm and accentuation of the words. While there are many melodies whose beauty and distinctive character have preserved them down to the present day, it must be allowed that many others are monotonous and

wanting in individuality, mainly owing to their being made up of a number of stock musical phrases recurring again and again. Of tunes taken from the French Genevan psalter there are thirty-two in all, including some of the finest in that collection, but unfortunately many of these have been completely spoiled, by being forced to fit words of which the rhythm and scansion is quite different. Had the adaptations all been as carefully made as Psalms c. and cxxiv., no doubt many more of these tunes would have survived and passed into our modern psalmody. One example of this, out of several which might be given, is the fine tune set in the French psalter to Psalm xlii. The French metre and rhythm are exactly reproduced in a modern English version of which the first verse is:

“ Like the hart for brooks of water
Pants my soul for Thee, O God.
For the living God it thirsteth ;
When before God shall I come ?
Day and night my flowing tears
Unto me my bread have been,
All day long they taunt me saying
Where is now thy God Jehovah.”

Our compilers, however, set the tune to a version of Psalm xxvii. in ordinary long metre, beginning “ The Lord my light and health will be.” A comparison of the two metres will at once show how utterly bad, and really unsingable such an adaptation is.

One rather striking feature of the collection is the prevalence of tunes in minor modes. Only about half of the tunes are in major scales. We are accustomed nowadays to associate tunes in the minor mode almost exclusively with words of a sad or plaintive nature, but evidently the psalmodists of the Reformation did not so associate them, for the psalms to which they set minor melodies are in very many cases quite of an opposite character.

For about fifty years after its introduction the various editions of the psalm book show almost no substantial alteration of, or addition to, its musical contents. But in 1615 an important new feature makes its appearance, namely, the addition of a number of what are called *common* as distinguished from *proper* tunes. In the edition, printed in that year (1615) by Andro Hart in Edinburgh, the psalms are preceded by a group of twelve tunes without words under the heading, “ The XII Common Tunes to which all Psalmes of eight syllables in the first line and sixe in the next may be sung.” The tunes have names attached to them, and are the following: Old Common, Kings, Dukes, English, French, London, Stilt (or York), Dunfermling, Dundie, Abbaye, Glasgow, Martyrs. Five of these—Old Common, Kings, English, London and Glasgow—are not to be found in our modern books, but the others are still familiar.

The origin of these tunes is just as obscure as that of the proper tunes ; all that can be said is that they would most probably be actually in use before they were printed, and that nine of the twelve, not being found in any English book of earlier date, are probably of Scottish origin. Among these nine are French, Stilt, Dunfermline, Abbey and Martyrs.

The introduction of these common tunes was evidently received with favour, for their number went on increasing in subsequent editions, till in 1635, when the most complete edition of the psalm book we know of appeared, they numbered thirty-one. Of these the following, in addition to the six above named, are still in use : Cheshire, Newtown (or New London), Melrose, Elgin, Caithness, Durham and Winchester. The gradual introduction of common tunes would seem to indicate that practical difficulty was felt in getting congregations to learn the large number of proper tunes, and it was no doubt found convenient to have a few tunes which could be sung to a large number of psalms, and which therefore would soon become familiar. At a later period the use of a limited number of common tunes became almost universal, no doubt to the ease of congregations and saving of trouble to precentors, but also to the undoubted impoverishment of our national psalmody.

So far as at present ascertained the earliest appearance in print of harmonised tunes was in 1625. In an edition of that year the common tunes are given in harmony, and this is repeated in other editions, but that of 1635 is the only one in which all the tunes, proper as well as common, are harmonised throughout. This does not prove that up to this date the tunes had been sung in melody only—indeed, there is direct evidence to the contrary—but it does seem to show that singing in harmony by congregations generally was the exception rather than the rule. Had it been otherwise it is pretty certain that the printers of the psalm book would at an earlier date than 1635 have supplied the public with harmonised editions.

The harmony which was ultimately supplied is in four parts, which are designated Tenor, Contra, Treble and Bassus ; but a little explanation is required as to what these parts actually were, as the terms Tenor and Treble have now a somewhat different signification. The Tenor was the melody of the tune, the word, by derivation and as applied to harmonised compositions, meaning the melody or *canto fermo* which was *held*, while the other parts sang something different. The Treble and Contra (or *contra-tenor* as it is in full) were harmony parts above the Tenor in pitch (at least when the latter was sung by male voices). The Treble was presumably sung by female voices, and the Contra either by low-pitched female or high-pitched male voices. It is not possible to say to what extent the arrangement was carried out in congregational singing, but the presumption is that where harmony was practised at all, a large

proportion of the congregation, both male and female, sang the melody, while a minority who had the requisite skill and training might sing the other parts.

Of the fact that the tunes had actually been harmonised at an early date we are left in no doubt, for a manuscript has fortunately been preserved containing all the proper tunes of the psalmes in four-part harmony. This manuscript is in four separate books, each containing one of the voice parts, named respectively Treble, Contra-tenor, Tenor and Bassus. Three of the books—the Treble, Tenor and Bass—are in the Library of the University of Edinburgh, the fourth, the Contra-tenor, unhappily much mutilated, is in the British Museum. The manuscript dates from the year 1566 and is the handiwork of Thomas Wode or Wood, Vicar of St Andrews, as we learn from several notes contained in it. That at the close of the Tenor book is as follows: Endis y^e psalmes set furth in iiii partes conforme to the tennour of y^e Buke. 1566. Be ane honorable and singulare cunning man David Pables in Sanct Andrews. And noted & wreaten be me Thomas Wode.” In another place Wode has inserted a note which supplies some interesting information as to the composers of the harmonies and the circumstances of the execution of the work: “I have thought gude to make it knawin wha sett the thre pairtes to, and agreable to the Tenor, or common pairt of the Psalme buke: the Mess and Papisticall service abolished, and the preaching of the Evangell stablisit heir into Sanct Andrews, my Lord James (who efter was Erle of Murray and Regent) being at the Reformation, Pryour of Sanct Andrews, causes ane of his channons, to name David Pables, being ane of the chieff musitians into this land, to set three pairtes to the Tenor: and my Lord commandit the said David to leave the curiosity of musike, and sa to make plaine and dulce, and sa he has done: but the said David he was not earnest: bot I being cum to the Toune to remain, I was ever requesting and solisting till they were all set: . . . I oft did wreat to Maister Andro Blakehall, to Jhone Angus, and sum Andro Kempe set, sa I notit tenors, and send sum to Mussilbrough and sum to Dunfarmling, and sa wer done: God grant wee use them all to his glory!”

The expression “curiosity of music” in this extract refers to the intricate compositions of the polyphonic school, such as the madrigals, etc., of the Elizabethan period. David Pablis was enjoined not to indulge in this style of composition, but to employ simple harmony only in his settings of the tunes. Of the use of harmony in singing the psalms we have also incidental evidence from the *Diary* of James Melville, who, writing of the year 1574 tells that “in ther yeirs I learned my music, wherein I tuk graitter delyt, of an Alexander Smithe, servant to the Primarius of our College, who haid been treaned upe amangis the

mounks in the Abbay. I lerned of him the gam, plean-song, and monie of the treables of the Psalmes, whereof sum I could weill sing in the Kirk."

Some further light is cast on this topic by the interesting preface to the 1635 edition of the psalm book, signed with the initials E. M., which have been identified as those of Edward Miller, a graduate of Edinburgh University and teacher in the city. Miller was apparently what we would now call the musical editor of the book, and in his preface he gives in quaint language his reasons for undertaking the work. He says: "The motives moving mee hereunto are chiefly God's glorie, the advancement of this Art, the saving of paines to Teachers thereof; the incitation of others to greater acts of this kind, the earnest desire of some well affected, the imployment of my poor talent; together with an abuse observed in all churches, where sundrie *Tribles*, *Bases* and *Counters* set by diverse authors, being sung upon one and the same *Tenor*, do discordingly rub each upon another, offending both Musically, and rude ears, which never tasted of this art; which unhappie fault I thought might happily bee helped and the Church Musick made more plausible by publishing this Booke. I acknowledge sincerely the whole compositions of the parts to belong to the primest musicians that ever this kingdom has, as Deane John Angus, Blackhall, Smith, Peebles, Sharp, Black, Buchan; and others famous for their skill in this kind. I would be most unwilling to wrong such Shyning lights of the Art, by obscuring their names, and arrogating anything to myself, which any ways might derogate from them: For (God is my witnes) I affect not popular applause, knowing how litle soliditie there is in that shadow like seeming substance, studying to approve myself to God in a good conscience; which testimonie finding in my Soul, I contemn all worldly approbation or opprobation. The first copies of these parts were doubtlessly right set down by these skilfull authors, but have been wronged and vitiat by unskilful copiers thereof, as all things are injured by tyme: And heerein consisted a part of my paines, that collecting all the sets I could find on the Psalmes, after painful tryall thereof, I selected the best for this work, according to my simple judgement."

Whether Miller's praiseworthy effort to make the congregational singing of his day more harmonious was successful or not, we have no means of judging. In any case we are indebted to him for what is by far the most complete edition, as regards music, of the old psalm book. His edition was the first of its kind, and it was also the last, for those issued subsequently either have a reduced number of tunes, the melodies only being given, or are without music altogether.

V

Such, then, was the material for church praise prepared under the direction of the Reformed Church of Scotland and put into the hands of the people. The question may now be asked—to what extent was this material really made use of, and what was the actual condition of psalmody at the Reformation and during the succeeding century? It is hardly possible to give very complete answers to these questions, but we may turn for information in the first place to the directions concerning psalmody in the Book of Common Order. In the order for public worship on the Lord's day, after the opening prayers of confession, the direction follows, "the people sing a Psalm all together in a playne tune," and after the sermon and the "Prayer for the whole estate of Christ's Church" which followed it, a psalm is again directed to be sung before the benediction is pronounced. In the order for the administration of the Lord's Supper, Psalm ciii. is appointed to be sung at the close of the service (a custom which has continued to the present day). In the Marriage Service Psalm cxxviii. was to be used; and other psalms are similarly mentioned in connection with various services. The Book of Common Order was not a liturgy which had to be followed exactly in all its details; it was rather a model by which ministers were enjoined to regulate the services, so that the directions in regard to psalm singing may not have been rigidly adhered to. Indeed the First Book of Discipline classes the singing of psalms among things that are profitable though not absolutely necessary, but at the same time it exhorts "men, women and children to exercise themselves in the psalmes, that when the kirk doth convene and sing, they may be the more able together with common heart and voice to praise God."

In the records of the period there are many references to the "Sang Schules" which existed in many of the burghs of Scotland. These schools were pre-reformation institutions and their main purpose was doubtless to train boys for the musical services of the church. At the same time they filled the place of elementary schools—writing, arithmetic, and other subjects being taught in them. After the Reformation the Sang Schules were still kept up, and those attending them were instructed in the music of the psalms. Frequently the master of the Sang Schule held also the appointment of precentor in the church, or "uptakar of the psalms" as he was called. We have no information as to whether the pupils of the school were generally employed as a choir to lead the praise in church. Indeed it is just possible that choirs were looked upon with suspicion as savouring of the "dregs of popery," and the duty of leading the psalms in worship was discharged solely by the "uptakar." One entry, however, in the records of the Kirk-Session of Stirling is

interesting as indicating that in that church something of the nature of a choir was in use. The entry is in the year 1621 and in it the "maisters of the kirk wark" are ordered to rebuild the pulpit and further to "mak commodious seattis about the fit thereof meit for the maister of the sang schooll and his bairnis to sit on, for singing of the psalms in the tyme of the holy service of the kirk."

While there is a dearth of information on points of detail regarding the arrangements for instruction in psalmody, and for the conduct of the praise in public worship, we have abundant evidence in the histories, diaries and biographies of the period of the important place held by psalm singing in the religious life of the people. On very numerous occasions the feelings both of the nation and of individuals find expression in the singing of a psalm, and this whether the occasion be one of joy or grief, triumph or trouble, praise or penitence. When Queen Mary arrived in Scotland on August 19, 1561, a company of citizens gathered together in the evening and sang psalms beneath her window at Holyrood; and a fortnight later, on the occasion of her state procession through the capital, a psalm was sung at the Netherbow, and another on her arrival at Holyrood. Again when James VI entered Edinburgh in 1579 a ceremony took place at the old port in the West Bow at which, according to Calderwood, "the musicians sang the XX psalm, and others played upon the viols." At the baptism of Prince Henry at Stirling in 1594 Psalm xxi. was sung during the service, and at the close of the banquet which followed, "thanks being given to God, there was sung the 128th Psalm, with diverse voices and toones, and musical instruments playing."

Many instances of a more private nature could be given from the lives of the Reformers and others. James Melville tells in his *Diary* that when he and his companions returned to Scotland after a period of banishment "we haid occasion diverse tymes to sing unto the praise of our God that 126 psalme with manie ma." In 1606 John Welsh and some of his comrades were sentenced to banishment. When they assembled on the shore at Leith to go on board the vessel which was to take them to France, many of their sympathisers were gathered together, and as they embarked all joined in singing Psalm xxiii. This, of course, was not our familiar "The Lord's my shepherd," but the old version by Wm. Whittingham:

"The Lord is only my support,
and He that doth me feed,
How then shall I lack anything
of which I stand in need?"

Perhaps the incident which is of the greatest interest in connection with our present subject is the reception of John Durie in Edinburgh

when he returned to his pastoral charge in the city after a time of banishment. The following is Calderwood's description of the scene: "As he is coming to Edinburgh there met him at the Gallow Green 200, but ere he came to the Netherbow this number increased to 400, but they were no sooner entered but they increased to 600 or 700, and within short space the whole street was replenished even to Sanct Geiles Kirk: the number was esteemed to 2000. At the Netherbow they took up the 124 Psalme, 'Now Israel may say, etc.,' and sung in such a pleasant tune in four parts, known to the most part of the people that coming up the street all bareheaded till they enter in the Kirk with such a great sound and majestie that it moved both themselves and all the huge multitude of the beholders, looking out at the shots and overstairs with admiration and astonishment."

That the psalm book was in universal and constant demand in the country is evidenced by the facts that between the years 1564 and 1644 about sixty editions were issued from the press, and that the numbers printed of each edition were generally very large as shown by the inventories of the stock held by the various printers. Of all these editions together, only a small number of copies are now in existence, indicating that the books were not only bought by the people, but were worn out by actual use.

The first attempt to displace the Reformation Psalm Book was made by Charles I, who tried to substitute for it the version published as the work of his father, James VI, but of which only a small portion can really be credited to that monarch. The Church of Scotland, however, would have none of it, and when in pursuance of a similar policy, Charles and his adviser, Archbishop Laud, endeavoured to supplant the old Book of Common Order by a liturgy framed in imitation of that of the Church of England, the Scottish people showed unmistakably that they declined to have either their prayers or their praise regulated by royal authority. Nevertheless in the years of confusion and conflict which followed the ill-starred attempt of 1637 and the signing of the Covenant in 1638, the old book was as a matter of fact allowed to fall into the background, and what the Scottish Church declined to do at the bidding of the King, she did of her own accord in the vain and fruitless attempt to achieve uniformity in church government and worship with the southern kingdom.

It was in pursuance of this aim that our present version of the psalms was prepared and sanctioned in the year 1650. So far as its literary features are concerned there can be no doubt that the version of 1650 is an improvement on that which preceded it, though, as already noticed, it suffers grievously from the lack of variety in its metres. Unfortunately the leaders of the church at the period of the Westminster Assembly

had not the same practical concern for the music of the sanctuary as was evinced by their predecessors of the Reformation period. The new book was issued without tunes, and absolutely no guidance was given as to where suitable music was to be found. The results of this most lamentable neglect do not fall within the scope of this paper ; suffice it to say that from that date (1650) begins what has been called the dark age of Scottish Psalmody, and at least a century passed before we find any evidence of either the church authorities or the people generally showing that they had any conception of the importance of the subject, or realising that all was not well in regard to it.

